

**Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw**  
**March 23, 2012**

As the weather continues to get warmer and the amount of daylight increases daily, more and more residents are getting out and taking a walk. Hopefully we've seen the last snowflakes for a while, meaning the sidewalks will be clear for pedestrians. Whenever possible, use them; it's always safer to walk outside the roadway. If there is not a sidewalk along your route, walk against traffic so you can see vehicles approaching. Always look both ways before crossing the street and avoid crossing from between parked cars. If a crossing signal is available at a busy intersection, use the button and be patient. Sometimes the pedestrian light won't come on immediately while the traffic lights go through a cycle or two. Walkers, joggers and runners should also wear the proper clothing; for weather and visibility. It's important to be seen, especially on busier roadways and at dusk or dawn.

One of the most popular pedestrian areas in our city is the Riverwalk. In fact, several other communities have developed trails to accommodate pedestrians, dog walkers and bicyclists. Staying safe along these routes is actually a bit easier, as motor vehicles are excluded. Despite warning signs, however, you still must be alert when using a path, just in case a vehicle does come along. It could be a service vehicle, police motorcycle or even a confused motorist, who happened to take a very bad turn. Either way, you don't want to be startled at the sudden appearance of a vehicle. Extra care should also be used when crossing a street that intersects the walkway. If you are riding a bicycle; be courteous and let pedestrians know you're there. Pathways are not designed for racing, so keep control of your speed at all times.

Personal safety is also important to remember when using a pathway, such as the Riverwalk; an area that's very safe. Practicing personal safety is easy as it's just about using common sense. Consider walking with a friend, carry a cell phone and avoid using the area in the dark. If you notice something suspicious or unusual, don't hesitate to call police. Try to keep track of landmarks along your route, just in case you need to use 911. The Amesbury Riverwalk abuts several landmarks and now even has markers to provide a reference. Providing as much detail as possible is important but even more so during an emergency. References such as the Bartley Building, Riverwalk Condos, Oak Street Bridge and Rte. 495 overpass can help emergency workers reach you quickly. If you do need to call 911, provide as much information as possible and stay on the line until help arrives. If using earphones, keep the volume under control so you're able to hear things around you too.

Finally, another scam alert to be aware of; a few residents have received calls recently from a company claiming to offer a service to help "clean up a computer." The calls were made by a woman with a "thick Jamaican" accent, claiming to be from a company called "Technocura." She offers to install software but fortunately the residents refused. A check of common scams revealed that victims of the scam had been charged \$299 for this service. Never allow anyone to install something on your computer or provide a credit card number to them. Unfortunately these scams are originating outside the country and running wild. If they provide a telephone number for you to contact them, don't use it. These telephone numbers are not toll-free and can result in a very expensive charge on your telephone bill.